



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Recently you received documents regarding a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposal to purchase by fee title 2,840 acres known as "Whitetail Prairie" from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for its appraised value. The land is located within FWP Administrative Region 4 and is approximately eight (8) miles east of Craig and 29 miles northeast of Helena in the Big Belt Mountains. Whitetail Prairie adjoins the FWP owned and managed 32,320 acre Beartooth Wildlife Management Area.

Comments received regarding the Whitetail Prairie Acquisition Proposal are summarized in the enclosed Decision Notice. No modifications were made to the documents you received as a result of the public review period. Please consider your previous copies of the draft Environmental Assessment and Management Plan as final.

It is my recommendation to purchase Whitetail Prairie fee title from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation utilizing FWP Habitat Montana and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pittman Robertson dollars, subject to approval by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Commission will be asked to approve the purchase at their December 11, 2014 meeting. The Montana Board of Land Commissioners will ultimately have final review and vote at their regularly scheduled meeting on December 15, 2014, should the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the Department's recommendation to purchase the parcel.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Bertellotti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Bertellotti" clearly distinguishable.

Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5840
gbertellotti@mt.gov

Decision Notice
“Whitetail Prairie Addition” to Beartooth Wildlife Management Area
Environmental Assessment

Prepared By:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 4 Wildlife Division
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls MT 59405

November 18, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has the authority under law (MCA 87-1-201) to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In 1987, the Montana Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 526, which earmarked hunting license revenues to secure wildlife habitat through lease, conservation easement or fee title acquisition (MCA 87-1-241 and 242). This is now referred to as FWP's Habitat Montana Program. Habitat Montana recognizes that certain native plant communities constituting wildlife habitat are worthy of perpetual conservation. Those communities include intermountain grasslands, sagebrush grasslands and riparian corridors. Whitetail Prairie includes such habitats and warrants conservation considerations. A fee title option was offered to FWP by Voegelé's Inc., owners of Whitetail Prairie. This offer reflects the landowners' desire to maintain and protect the property's wildlife and fisheries habitats forever for the benefit of the public and the resource. FWP asked Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to partner on the project, who is helping fund and facilitate the transaction. The purchase would guarantee public recreational access for hunting, trapping, hiking and wildlife viewing on the project area.

As with other FWP property interest proposals, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission must approve any easement or acquisition proposed by the Department. Should the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the Department's proposal for this purchase, the Montana Board of Land Commissioners is also required to review and approve/disapprove this action as it has a value greater than \$100,000 and is larger than 100 acres. This Decision Notice is part of that evaluation process.

After reviewing public comment on the proposed purchase, the FWP Region 4 Supervisor recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the fee title purchase of Whitetail Prairie from RMEF.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS

FWP is required to assess impacts to the human and physical environment under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The Whitetail Prairie acquisition proposal and its effects were documented by FWP in an Environmental Assessment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A public comment period for the Environmental Assessment (EA) was established and available from October 6 through November 4, 2014. A public notice of the proposed action was offered to about 50 newspapers and news outlets in the state, and was also placed on the FWP website under "Public Notices". A public meeting was held at the Wolf Creek School on October 20, 2014. Approximately 150 copies of the Environmental Assessment were electronically distributed to adjacent landowners, sportsmen groups, MT Stockgrowers, County Commissioners and other interested parties. Copies were available at the FWP Region 4 Headquarters during indicated comment period. Alternatives available in the draft EA for comment as follows:

Alternative A: No Action. Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not purchase the Whitetail Prairie property from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, who then as a result, would sell to another buyer by listing the property on the open market.

Alternative B: Acquisition of the Whitetail Prairie property. This alternative addresses the option of FWP purchasing the property fee title from RMEF utilizing FWP's Habitat Montana and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pittman Robertson dollars.

All public comments received remain on file at the Great Falls FWP office and are available for public review. Consideration and evaluation of public comment is distilled in the attached Public Comment and Issues Addendum to the EA.

Public Meeting: A public meeting was held at the Wolf Creek School on October 20, 2014 having one (1) member of the public in attendance. FWP representation included: Gary Bertellotti – Region 4 Supervisor, Graham Taylor – Region 4 Wildlife Manager, Cory Loecker - Region 4 Great Falls Area Wildlife Biologist, Tegan Winters and Bryan Golie - Area Game Wardens. Copies of the EA and Management Plan were made available to all attendees, as was a comment sheet.

Written Comments: Written comment totaled 61 responses (57 individuals and 4 organized groups). Fifty five (55) responses endorsed Alternative B - "Proposed Action" of FWP purchasing Whitetail Prairie fee title from RMEF, with six (6) respondents opposing/neutral to the "Proposed Action". Further analysis of comment follows:

Comment opposed/neutral to purchasing Whitetail Prairie (Alt A - "No Action")	6
<u>Comment supporting purchase of Whitetail Prairie (Alt B - "Proposed Action")</u>	<u>55</u>
Total comments received (one nonresident)	61

Comments/responses are included in a Public Comment and Issues Addendum attached to this Decision Notice.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis in the EA and in consideration of public comment addressed in the Addendum, FWP has selected the "Proposed Action" Alternative B. This decision is in the best interest of the public, wildlife and wildlife habitat resources and is consistent with current

Habitat Montana program guidelines, goals and objectives. FWP has reviewed the EA and applicable laws, regulations and policies and has determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

MODIFICATIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

No modifications to the Environmental Analysis or Management Plan were made as a result of the public review period.

DECISION

Utilizing the Environmental Analysis, Management Plan and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP that addresses the interests and issues identified for this proposed project. Given results of FWP's analysis coupled with public comment, FWP's purchase of the Whitetail Prairie from RMEF utilizing FWP Habitat Montana and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pittman Robertson funds is warranted. After review of this proposal and the corresponding public support and comment, it is my recommendation that FWP purchase the Whitetail Prairie property from RMEF subject to approval by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

CONCLUSION

By notification of this Decision Notice, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. The finding of selection of Alternative B - "Proposed Action" is the product of this Decision Notice.



Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405

11/18/2014
Date

Whitetail Prairie Addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area Environmental Assessment

Public Comment and Issues Addendum

Public comment was solicited on the draft Environmental Assessment “Whitetail Prairie Addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area” from October 6 through November 4, 2014. Written comment totaled 61 responses. Fifty five (55) responses endorsed “Proposed Action” Alternative B of the Draft EA, with six (6) respondents opposing/neutral to the “Proposed Action” of FWP purchasing the Whitetail Prairie property from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). Further analysis of comment follows:

Comment opposed/neutral to the purchase of Whitetail Prairie (Alt A - “No Action”)	6
<u>Comment supporting purchase of Whitetail Prairie (Alt B - “Proposed Action”)</u>	<u>55</u>
Total comments received (one nonresident)	61

Issues and Comments:

Fifty five (55) individuals and/or organizations commented in favor of Alternative B - “Proposed Action” of FWP to purchase the Whitetail Prairie from RMEF. These parties supported maintaining wildlife, wildlife habitats, open spaces and recreational access opportunities into perpetuity. Six (6) individuals were opposed/neutral to the project as proposed by FWP. Comments received on the proposal as follows with responses to comments/concerns by FWP provided:

Comments received opposing/neutral to the “Proposed Action” as follows:

From: wranglergirl_33@hotmail.com [mailto:wranglergirl_33@hotmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2014 2:30 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I absolutely DO NOT believe that FWP needs to be purchasing more property. It is fiscally irresponsible to FWP to take make this purchase. The purchase price is over \$4 million, this is outrageous, especially when FWP will be then asking the legislature for another \$6 million to operate the property. How can we ask the TAX-PAYING public to foot the bill for this? FWP has enough to do with the property they already have in addition to managing bison and wolves in Montana.

From: jthiessen@midrivers.com [<mailto:jthiessen@midrivers.com>]

Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 8:29 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

If RMEF already owns it, why waste the money. I do not see what you are gaining and it is appraised much higher then it is worth.

From: jwarner@3rivers.net [<mailto:jwarner@3rivers.net>]

Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 3:04 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

In my opinion FWP which is a state agency does not need to own more land. I might be old fashion but the state does not need to be a land barron.

From: manouk@mtintouch.net [<mailto:manouk@mtintouch.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2014 10:26 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I oppose the FWP purchase of more land. FWP is \$6 million short to operate with this legislative season, 2015. FWP has an undefined backlog of maintenance that will be left to future generations if it is not addressed now. Example, ice flows on the Yellowstone river have caused \$300,000 in damage. FWP has much more in maintenance, in the \$millions.

Interior Maintenance backlog - \$17 BILLION

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11424t.pdf>

Forest Service Maintenance backlog - \$15 BILLION

<http://www.taxpayer.net/library/article/economists-criticize-forest-service-over-10-billion-road-backlog>

Highway Trust Fund unfunded - \$12 BILLION annually

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/15/usa-congress-hiqways-idUSL2N0N71KJ20140415>

What generation is going to fix these assets? With drought conditions continue in much of the Western and South Western US and the continued shrinking cattle inventory, L&H Packing Company of San Antonio, Texas closed its doors. The closure will impact the 325 employees. Cattle numbers are still at the 1950 level when the US population was 150 million. Today the US population is 318 million.

L&H and 6 other major beef packing facilities have closed across the country due to the beef shortage. A total of 4,575 direct permanent jobs have been lost. If the USDA imports beef from Brazil and Argentina, we will eventually import Foot and Mouth Disease. FMD will destroy the cloven hoofed populations domestic and wild. If you think that is a long shot the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PED virus) from China has killed 12 million baby pig in the US.
<http://thecourier.com/opinion/columns/2014/02/11/pork-virus-spreads-to-20-states/>

No more taking land out of production. Take care of what you have.

From: jkornick@q.com [<mailto:jkornick@q.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 10:43 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

If the RMEF owns the property (I am a member) did FWP intend to buy it from them before they bought it? If not let them own it & FWP just manage it as part of the Beartooth.

From: glboyer@hotmail.com [<mailto:glboyer@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Sunday, November 02, 2014 7:42 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I am a hunter and enjoy having access to public lands, but I am also a believer in government not owning property. I believe these lands would be better managed in private ownership and don't believe that FWP should own property. Also, this purchase will take these lands off the tax roles. I believe this also flies in the face of propriety since this purchase is from a not-for-profit organization, RMEF. Improve your management skills and stop adding land.

glboyer

FWP RESPONSE:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has the authority under law (MCA 87-1-201) to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In 1987, the Montana Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 526, which earmarked hunting license revenues to secure wildlife habitat through lease, conservation easement or fee title acquisition (MCA 87-1-241 and 242).

Whitetail Prairie property was appraised using The Uniform Standards for Federal Land Acquisition (UASFLA), also known as the "Yellow Book". These are the US Federal Standards for Appraisals performed in connection to most Federal land acquisitions, exchanges, and/or dispensations. These uniform standards have guided the appraisal process in federal land acquisitions since they were first published by the Interagency Land Acquisition Conference in 1973. This appraisal process was required by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to obtain Pittman Robertson funds and was conducted by an independent appraisal firm. FWP is proposing to purchase the Whitetail Prairie property at the appraised value of \$4,075,000 using $\frac{1}{4}$ hunting license dollars from FWP's Habitat Montana Program (\$1,018,750) and $\frac{3}{4}$ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Pittman-Robertson dollars (\$3,056,250). No general fund or tax dollars will be used in funding the project.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) is partnering with FWP in facilitating and funding the transaction from Voegelé's Inc., owners of Whitetail Prairie to FWP. RMEF does not own land nor has the infrastructure capable of managing land. RMEF commonly assists state and federal agencies in land transactions to include easements and acquisitions. If FWP does not successfully purchase the Whitetail Prairie from RMEF, the Landowner will place the property on the open real estate market.

Comments received endorsing the "Proposed Action" as follows:

From: tsstivers@outlook.com [<mailto:tsstivers@outlook.com>]

Sent: Monday, October 06, 2014 2:30 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I strongly support the purchase of the "Whitetail Prairie Addition" and making it a part of the Beartooth WMA. This purchase is particularly good considering the abutting BLM and DNRC lands.

Sincerely, Thomas S. Stivers

From: ron@cascademontana.com [<mailto:ron@cascademontana.com>]

Sent: Monday, October 06, 2014 6:02 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

This is an excellent opportunity to expand an outstanding Montana resource for the benefit of all citizens, especially future generations. I strongly support this acquisition.

From: jim_lange@fws.gov [mailto:jim_lange@fws.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 10:04 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I support the acquisition of the Whitetail Prairie Addition to the Beartooth WMA.

From: mkdgold@gmail.com [<mailto:mkdgold@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 11:16 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

Dear Mr. Bertellotti

I toured the Beartooth WMA with Cory Loecker and other sportsmen Thursday July 17 & 18, 2014, viewing the Whitetail Prairie area the state is proposing to purchase. This would be an excellent addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area. I've hunted the Beartooth with a passion over the last 35 years, with my Dad, and now all 3 kids have all kids have harvested elk on the Beartooth, creating memories we will never forget. My kids are in college now, but eagerly awaiting the opening of rifle season to fill their Beartooth elk tags and provide meat to their roomies in college. I've seen the Montana FWP do an excellent job managing the BWMA over the years providing great hunting opportunities, and know the Whitetail Prairie addition will provide outstanding elk habitat and recreational opportunities for years to come.

Sincerely Mike Gold
1317 10th Ave SW
Great Falls, Montana 59404

From: Georgegold76@gmail.com [<mailto:Georgegold76@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 12:06 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

That sounds amazing!! Let's do it!

From: gretmil57@gmail.com [<mailto:gretmil57@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 6:24 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I am particularly delighted by this proposed purchase. Securing this valuable parcel in the Big Belts will protect critical wildlife habitat and protect important streams that are critical fisheries. It is a sensible investment in the future of the state and its citizens. Well done.

From: rjcrooks@msn.com [<mailto:rjcrooks@msn.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2014 9:03 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

Dear FWP,

After reviewing the Draft EA I want to state that I support the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie Addition to the BTWMA.

The fact that this addition adjoins a current WMA makes this purchase all that much better. Blocked up habitat is far more important to wildlife than fragmented habitat, and this addition will make the wildlife value of the BTWMA increase in a substantial way.

I also like that the addition will be open to public use during hunting seasons, and managed in a manner consistent with that of the BTWMA.

Large blocked up land holdings such as this addition are very attractive to wealthy out of state interests. I have no doubt that if FWP does not purchase this property, it will be lost to public access through it's private sale. The only way to ensure that does not happen is through this purchase--and I am in full support.

Thanks,
Robert Crooks

From: mikesed.waliguy@gmail.com [<mailto:mikesed.waliguy@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 5:59 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

In my younger years I often hunted in the Beartooth Wildlife Management area and often observed lots of elk utilizing the Whitetail property. I visualized then that this property would be a great addition for the public and preserving the land for wildlife. I often worry that FWP has an underlying agenda to move bison onto public land such as I believe might happen with the Milk River property. Therefore I'm not a big supporter of FWP owning public land. I can see the value to the public for the Whitetail property and support its purchase as long as there is written assurance that bison will not be introduced there.

From: knowlesmontana@juno.com [<mailto:knowlesmontana@juno.com>]

Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 12:50 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I agree with the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie ranch. My only recommendation is: no road(s) be changed on the Whitetail Prairie Ranch - because, of a possible future need for fighting fires. Fires are frequent on the Holter lake campgrounds and due to the prevailing SW winds the fires rush onto the Sterling Ranch which adjoins this property. Scott Blackman of the Sterling Ranch has done a good job of preparing his ranch for fires and we need to be a good neighbor and have our property [wma] properly prepared for fire fighting. nothing good comes out of scratching the soil in a feeble attempt to make it look like it once did, EXCEPT weeds. Leave well enough alone. Flat surfaces are always preferable to side hills for hiking etc. ask an elk... Randall Knowles, Great Falls, MT

From: suttondmd@netzero.com [<mailto:suttondmd@netzero.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2014 7:13 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

that's just an average price, nothing like a great deal...I would suggest offering around 3m at the most.

From: joshua.schrecengost@mt.usda.gov [<mailto:joshua.schrecengost@mt.usda.gov>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 8:22 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I support the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie Addition to the BTWMA. Although the remote location limits the amount of people that will use this area for recreation it is a strategic purchase that will enhance the overall natural resource value of the BTWMA and the watershed in general. I strongly encourage FWP to develop a management strategy that includes grazing leases to manage vegetation for wildlife habitat and long term sustainability of the ecosystem. Thank you.

Joshua Schrecengost, NRCS Wildlife Biologist

From: btr@3rivers.net [<mailto:btr@3rivers.net>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 8:34 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I support the proposed purchase of the Whitetail Prairie. I am a hunter and I belong to the Charlie Russell Back Country Horsemen of Great Falls and the BCH of MT. This would make a great addition to the BTWMA.

Rich Carl

From: stultsj@aol.com [<mailto:stultsj@aol.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 9:58 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail Prairie Comment

This email is to submit comment in support of the proposed Whitetail Prairie purchase. It appears to be the perfect use of your authority and funds.

Sincerely,

Jack Stults
714 Red Letter St.
Helena, MT 59601
406-442-0971
stultsj@aol.com

Cory,

Looks like a pretty cool addition to a neat area---but it's a long way for an old man to walk.... I really enjoyed my hunt on that area but it would have been better if I hadn't been due for a hip replacement!

Bob

Bob Meduna
Wildlife Biologist, Management Section
Wildlife Division
Sacramento/Wilcox Wildlife Management Area
72775 V Road
Wilcox, NE 68982
308 478-5238

From: grant.snyder@yahoo.com [<mailto:grant.snyder@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 10:55 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I think this would be an amazing addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area. I fully support this action and hope that it is completed. :-)

From: Tom Kilmer [<mailto:montanatom1950@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 12:29 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail Prairie

Hi.

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the proposed acquisition of Whitetail Prairie. Yes, please complete this great proposal. I frequently hike and bicycle in the Beartooth Game Range. The addition of Whitetail Prairie would really enhance public lands.

Yes, really do this, and keep Whitetail Prairie from being chopped up into crummy subdivision parcels.

Tom Kilmer
621 2nd Street
Helena, Montana
59601

From: ghostart@onewest.net [<mailto:ghostart@onewest.net>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 2:28 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

I think this would be a great addition to the Beartooth Wilderness Area. I would like to see this acquisition take place, thank you.

Dave Kettman
17 Bridger Mountain Rd
Clancy MT 59634

From: otisranch@wispwest.net [<mailto:otisranch@wispwest.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 7:34 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

Dear Fish Wildlife & Parks,

I support the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie Addition to the Beartooth WMA. Just securing the

access for future generations is worth the portion of FWP dollars going towards this project.
Thank You
Bert Otis

From: Charlie Marlen [<mailto:cjmarlen.mt@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 9:59 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: whitetail prairie acquisition

I support this addition to the Beartooth WMA. There are multiple good reasons that are well known.

Charles Marlen, M.D.

From: gwuerthner@gmail.com [<mailto:gwuerthner@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 09, 2014 10:32 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

Dear Mr. Bertellotti

I strongly support acquisition by MDFWP of the Whitetail Prairie addition to the Beartooth WMA. I think this addition will improve wildlife management, public access and recreational opportunities.

I do have concerns about continued livestock grazing on this property should it be acquired. It is my hope that livestock grazing would not be permitted. But the first priority is acquisition.

Thank you.

From: Alex Russell [<mailto:russella17@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 8:01 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail Prairie property located east of Wolf Creek

Dear Sir/Madame,

I strongly support the acquisition of the Whitetail Prairie property located east of Wolf Creek. This is outstanding wildlife habitat that will benefit local businesses and our future generations of outdoor enthusiasts.

Sincerely,

Alex Russell

McCaw and Company
676 Ferguson Ave #4
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-580-5047
406-587-5540 office

Name: Thom Danenhower
Phone Number: 4064957025
E-mail: tdanenhower@mmia.net

Good Afternoon:

Say I enjoyed the article about the FW&P possible purchase of the Whitetail Prairie Ranch. I think purchasing would be a good idea but not at \$4 million; this amounts to over \$1400 an acre and this is about double the market price. I think you folks will be repeating the mistake you made purchasing a ranch up on the Milk River - paid way too much for that one too. It seems owners see the government coming and decide to double the price - not fair to us tax payers and license holders. You should offer a top price of \$2 million and use the left over funds to start a perch rearing program in the unused Fort Peck Hatchery - perch stocks are really suffering locally and it would be nice if you folks did something on the fishing side vs. paying too much for hunting access sites.

Thanks, Thom

From: ddrdnewman@gmail.com [<mailto:ddrdnewman@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 11:56 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

This is great news. Having more land for me to be able to access would be a great thing. I have been going to the Beartooth since I was 13 years old. Now I'm 52. I have a great love for this land and would like to see this happen.

From: Gold.avery@gmail.com [<mailto:Gold.avery@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 3:30 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

The FWP should purchase this land. That area
Is great elk habitat and is managed very well.

From: tricityinc@aol.com [<mailto:tricityinc@aol.com>]
Sent: Sunday, October 12, 2014 9:59 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

awesome, this purchase is a great idea. Please keep looking for great properties to buy or get conservation easements on.

Thanks Brad Lencioni

From: kelly st onge [<mailto:kellys1224@gmail.com>]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 4:25 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail Prairie Acquisition

I write in favor of the Whitetail Prairie addition to the BTWMA. Not only will this acquisition provide additional and perpetual public recreational opportunities, the additional BLM and DNRC leases that will be acquired provides substantial additional public and wildlife benefit. Securing and preserving this property also serves to protect the existing BTWMA from competing uses on the Whitetail Prairie should

the property end up not being acquired by FWP. Given that there is limited potential for additional expansion of the BTWMA, I am highly in favor of taking advantage of the opportunity that is presently available. At appraised value, the purchase price is fair and does not even begin to account for the benefits and protection afforded to the native populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout, other species, and perpetual public ownership. I suspect the majority of sportsmen, resource managers and preservationists would agree.

Please seriously consider and take advantage of this rare opportunity.

Regards,

Kelly St. Onge
311 Park Ave
Whitefish, MT 59937

From: Anita [mailto:anita_ronning@bresnan.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 16, 2014 10:18 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: whitetail prairie acquisition

Myself and my family are all in on this purchase by Montana FWP.

Sincerely,
Ron K. Ronning
1301 West hill Drive,
Great Falls, Mt.59404

From: Elk4meiss@hotmail.com [<mailto:Elk4meiss@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2014 7:17 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

The acquisition of this property by MT-FWP would allow for continued wildlife habitat management with the focus of natural resource conservation. I support the acquisition of the Beartooth WMA "Whitetail Addition"

From: Mt.horsepower@gmail.com [<mailto:Mt.horsepower@gmail.com>]
Sent: Sunday, October 19, 2014 1:28 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I am in favor of FWP acquiring this property, and adding it to the Beartooth game range. However, as an addition to the wma, I support having it added to the Beartooth hunting district (455). Thanks for the opportunity to give comments. Steve Wadsworth

From: Jeff Pallister [<mailto:jpallister@q.com>]
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2014 3:10 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: purchase of whitetail property in Beartooth area

I totally support this purchase before some out of stater buys it and closes it up.

From: jameswcrichton@yahoo.com [<mailto:jameswcrichton@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 22, 2014 11:12 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I am pleased to see FWP and Pittman Robertson dollars used for this purchase. It is great to see the continuity of such a wildlife management area. This purchase is a wise choice. Thanks for the good work.

From: donocox@gmail.com [<mailto:donocox@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 22, 2014 12:16 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I support this acquisition. We need to take advantage of every opportunity we can to protect valuable habitat.

From: vinceluparell@hotmail.com [<mailto:vinceluparell@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2014 3:31 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

Aquiring the "Whitetail Prairie addition is a great idea. I fully support this addition to the Beartooth WMA. It will help the wildlife flourish in the area and is a great piece of property for the public to have access too. Weather you are a hunter, hiker, or wildlife viewer, everyone wins with addition. Thank you for your valuable time.

From: vinceluparell@hotmail.com [<mailto:vinceluparell@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2014 6:00 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I am writing on behalf of the Great Falls Chapter of Safari Club International board of directors. We are in Full support of acquiring the Whitetail Prairie Addition. This acquisition will help ensure that the land is used for wildlife and the future of hunting. We appreciate your hard work and all you do for hunting and ensuring there will always be habitat for the game and non game species that we all love. Thank you Vince Luparell

From: Mark@callcentraltech.com [<mailto:Mark@callcentraltech.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 7:04 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I feel this is a great idea

From: Sparkyandme@bresnan.net [<mailto:Sparkyandme@bresnan.net>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 7:02 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

Would be a good purchase!! More access is a good thing!!

From: 19cubsfan08@gmail.com [<mailto:19cubsfan08@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 6:53 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

This is a great idea, I support it.

From: J1o9n8e5s@yahoo.com [<mailto:J1o9n8e5s@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 6:50 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

This will be a good idea

From: Derek@callcentraltech.com [<mailto:Derek@callcentraltech.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, October 29, 2014 6:48 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I think this would be great opportunity for hunters of all ages to enjoy exceptional hunting for years to come. I look forward to hearing about the purchase of the land. Great idea!!

From: nwoolard@msn.com [<mailto:nwoolard@msn.com>]
Sent: Thursday, October 30, 2014 1:45 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

Yes, we are in favor of the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie Addition adjoining the Beartooth WMA. Having a cabin at Holter Lake we spend a lot of time on the Beartooth and enjoy it immensely. We have walked, rode horses or driven just about the entire area. We are so thankful to Bill Milton and his siblings for wanting to keep this ranch as an elk preserve and to FWP purchasing it. Any addition of land to the Beartooth is a plus.

Nancy Woolard & Frank Bushell

From: Deborah Ries [<mailto:riesrd@3riversdbs.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 31, 2014 2:36 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: ATTN: whitetail prairie acquisition

I am in support of the Beartooth WMA- Whitetail prairie addition. I have reviewed the environmental assessment & support this addition to the Beartooth, excellent public benefit & hunting opportunity.

Zane Drishinski
253 Dairy Rd.
Conrad, Mt. 59425

From: Deborah Ries [<mailto:riesrd@3riversdbs.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 31, 2014 2:32 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: ATTN: Whitetail Prairie Acquisition

We support the Beartooth WMA Whitetail Prairie addition. We have personally toured this property-We have hunted the Beartooth since 1970, the year it was acquired by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (44 years). We have been members of the Devil's Kitchen Working Group since 1989 & are very familiar with this Property. This addition to the Beartooth WMA would provide more

public opportunity. Whitetail Prairie is what the Beartooth was before it burned 2 times!! What a nice addition.

Ronald & Deborah Ries

From: jmtesdal@gmail.com [<mailto:jmtesdal@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, November 03, 2014 8:56 AM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

Compliments on a very complete assessment. A worthy project for the people of Montana.

From the description I am unsure if grazing will be allowed and if so to what degree. Will special fencing be constructed for drift etc. and if so will it be of the lay down type for wildlife enhancement?
I am for the purchase.

Martin Tesdal

From: Robert Rasmussen [<mailto:robertsrasmussen@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 10:45 PM
To: fivpr42@mt.gov; FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail Prairie Acquisition

In general, I support proposed acquisitions by FWP. I have briefly reviewed the EA and believe the proposed purchase would benefit the public. I can't say I am familiar with the property, but I have utilized the BWMA on several occasions over the years. It seems like a lot of money (\$1435/acre) for unirrigated ranchland, but that is what the appraisal indicates.
Thanks for the opportunity to comment,

Robert Rasmussen
1027 Billings Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

-----Original Message-----
From: Terry Rutherford [<mailto:terryr18@mt.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 5:07 PM
To: FWP Region 4
Subject: Whitetail prairie Acquisition

To whom it may concern:

We believe the purchase of Whitetail Prairie to be added to the Beartooth Wildlife Management area is an excellent idea . We hunt on the Beartooth Wildlife Management area when the opportunity is presented to us through the permit system. We also camp and ride our horses there in the summertime. We think this purchase is a huge positive acquisition for recreationists and hunters. Thank you for letting us comment on this proposal.

incereely,

Carl, Terry, and Dan Rutherford Terry Rutherford terryr18@mt.net

From: mcross72@q.com [<mailto:mcross72@q.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 3:01 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Public Comment: Draft Environmental Assessment Beartooth Wildlife Managment Area

I support the purchase of the "Whitetail Prairie Addition from the REMF. Any additional land we can save from private ownership in this area will be a great addition of Public Lands for our future generations.

From: LYNN OATMAN [<mailto:loatman4@bresnan.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 2:02 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Whitetail Prairie Acquisition

I am in favor of the FWP purchasing the "Whitetail Prairie" from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for its appraised value. What a great addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area.

I would hate for this parcel of land up to end up in the hands of a private individual or corporation.

Sincerely,
Lynn Oatman

From: DAN SUE DELLAROSSA [<mailto:rossa4349@msn.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 1:39 PM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Whitetail Prairie Acquisition

MFW&P - as outdoor enthusiasts, sportswomen and men, and members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, we are writing *in support* of the Whitetail Prairie Land Acquisition. This project will benefit Montanans and wildlife by providing permanent recreational access to additional lands in a managed area. We appreciate all the work that is done by the numerous conservation groups that have partnered with FW&P on these important and timely issues.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sue & Dan Della Rossa

From: Teri Davidson [<mailto:bntdavidson@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 11:21 AM

To: FWP Region 4

Subject: Whitetail Prairie purchase

Yes a resounding yes to any expansion of the Beartooth WMA. As bow hunters and rifle hunters we have hunted this area for 40 years and also ride our horses here year every spring and summer. This is a wonderful public area enjoyed by many and should be protected and expanded at every opportunity. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Bruce Davidson

Teresa Davidson
P O Box 283
Ulm, MT 59485

Please give us your feedback on this public notice. Comments must be received by **Tuesday, November 4, 2014 5:00 PM**

Comments

As an sportsman and resident of Montana I'm in full support of the proposed purchase. This would be a great addition to the existing beartooth wma. This will insure future opertunities for sportsman aswell as conserve valuable resources. Thanks Tom

E-mail Address

tmcelroy77@hotmail.com

Submit Comments

Russell Country Sportsmen's Association



P.O. Box 282 • Great Falls, Montana 59403

October 29, 2014

Cory Loecker
Wildlife Biologist
Montana F.W.&P.
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Dear Cory:

This letter is to affirm that the Russell Country Sportsmen's Association fully supports the proposed acquisition of the Whitetail Prairie property.

As a long time participant of the Devil's Kitchen Working Group, RCSA has an in-depth understanding of this area in general and the Beartooth WMA in particular. Our assessment of this acquisition is that it will enhance the variety of well-managed wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities on the Beartooth.

The transfer of the existing grazing leases will also provide continuity of management practices important to the overall health of the WMA. The creative use of a variety of funding sources to acquire this property is another positive aspect of this proposed action.

Thank you for your work on this project as well as the work and involvement of the present landowners and the RMEF. Thanks also for providing the RCSA the opportunity to provide comments on this important project.

With kind regards,

John Borggreen
Past President
Russell Country Sportsmen's Association



November 4, 2014

MTFWP,

With this letter, the Great Falls Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI) expresses our support for the purchase of the Whitetail Prairie property. This property will make an excellent addition to the Beartooth WMA providing and protecting critical big game and mountain fisheries habitat, while providing recreational opportunities for future generations to come. Some of our Board of Directors toured the project area and the Beartooth WMA earlier this summer, providing our membership with nothing but positive feedback on the proposed addition. We also fully support habitat management of the Beartooth WMA to include livestock grazing systems where utilized. The Beartooth WMA provides excellent habitat for resident and migratory big game, mountain grouse, furbearers, nongame and fisheries. The Whitetail Prairie addition would expand those habitats, which we fully support.

The Great Falls Chapter of Safari Club International offers our continued support to projects and strategies that maintain and enhance fisheries and wildlife populations and their habitats, while continuing our hunting, fishing and recreating heritage in Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this and other projects in our area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Lencioni", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brad Lencioni
Great Falls Safari Club International
Chapter President

Montana Sportsmen ALLIANCE

Voice of Reason on Montana Fish and Wildlife Issues

October 29, 2014

Cory Loecker
Wildlife Biologist
Montana F.W.&P.
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

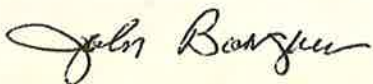
Dear Cory:

This Montana Sportsmen Alliance submits the following comments supporting the 2,840-acre fee title acquisition of the Whitetail Prairie Property. Our review of this project shows that the acquired area will enhance the existing high quality wildlife habitat and recreational uses and opportunities.

The Beartooth is known to be one of the most well managed WMA's in the state, including the grazing component. The acres being added will only add to that high level of management. The coalition of participants involved – FW&P, RMEF, present landowners, US F&WS, and sportsmen is additional evidence of the positive aspects of this proposed acquisition.

Our thanks to you and all involved for your efforts in bringing this project together. Thanks also for providing MSA the opportunity to comment on this excellent project.

Sincerely,



Joe Perry
John Borgreen
Vito Quartraro
Sam Milodragovich
JW Westman
Robert Wood

www.montanasportsmenalliance.com

www.pac.montanasportsmenalliance.com

P.O. Box 1324 | Hamilton, Montana 59840

**GALLATIN WILDLIFE
ASSOCIATION**

P. O. Box 5317
Bozeman, MT 59717
(406) 586-1729



Oct. 10, 2014

Beartooth WMA - Whitetail Prairie Addition
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Sent via email: fivpr42@mt.gov cc: Tom Toman tom@rmef.org

Subject: Whitetail Prairie Addition to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area

Dear FWP:

The Gallatin Wildlife Association (GWA) is a non-profit volunteer wildlife conservation organization representing hunters, anglers and other wildlife advocates in Southwest Montana and elsewhere. Our mission is to protect habitat and conserve fish and wildlife. GWA supports sustainable management of fish and wildlife populations through fair chase public hunting and fishing opportunities that will ensure these traditions are passed on for future generations to enjoy. We support the Montana constitution which states: "the opportunity to harvest wild game is a heritage that shall forever be preserved" and that "the legislature shall provide adequate remedies to prevent unreasonable depletion of natural resources." We appreciate this opportunity to comment.

Please know GWA supports the addition of the 2,840 acres known as "Whitetail Prairie" which adjoins the 32,320 acre Beartooth WMA. We appreciate the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) offering this important fish and wildlife habitat to the FWP for its appraised value. We also appreciate FWP partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to utilize Pittman Robertson dollars to help fund $\frac{3}{4}$ of this purchase. We also appreciate the leases on the adjoining 200 acre BLM and 640 acre Montana DNRC lands being transferred to FWP. A sincere thank you to all parties involved.

Respectfully,

Glenn Hockett
Volunteer President, Gallatin Wildlife Association

WILLIAM H. GOLD, D.D.S.
812 FORTY-SEVENTH STREET SOUTH
GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59405

TELEPHONE (406) 452-0690

Oct. 11, 2014

Mr. Gary Bertellotti
FWP R 4 Regional Supervisor
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Dear Mr. Bertellotti,

I am writing to enthusiastically support the FWP's plan to purchase another 2800 acres of land to add to the Beartooth Game Management Area.

The Beartooth game range was the scene of one of the most memorable hunting experiences I've ever had.

My son and I were hunting elk during the late 1990s on horseback. I am a diabetic on insulin. I told my son I thought it was time to check my blood sugar. We dismounted and tied the horses to a tree. I lanced an ear lobe for a drop of blood to put on the test strip. The blood sugar was within normal limits. My son then suggested we lead the horses as our trail led downhill and horses are more likely to slip going downhill in snow.

We were quietly leading our horses when my son saw what was probably a mentally deficient bull elk walking in broad daylight towards us, but lower on the hillside. We scrambled back into some trees to tie up the horses, then we got low in the snow as the bull elk got closer. I think it was the first elk I shot in Montana.

I was hunting with my son, and we were successful! It was a time I'll never forget.

I think FWP does a good job, and is a good steward of the funds it gets from the state.

I would therefore urge you to buy the additional land for the Beartooth.

Sincerely,



William H. Gold